

AIDS Brief

for professionals

Local Government



In every country, Government at all levels has a critical role to play in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. At a national level, the role may be primarily one of leadership, policy formulation and resource allocation, but at the local level, the role is much more immediate and intimate. This is because local government has responsibilities to the population it serves, responsibilities which inherently have the potential to impact on the epidemic, and opportunities to interact with groups who may be at the forefront of the epidemic, both in terms of being susceptible to infection as well as being the services providers at the coal-face.

How local government fulfils their role will be influenced by whether or not they perceive HIV/AIDS to be one of their natural development functions. This AIDS Brief demonstrates that local government has multiple opportunities to make meaningful contributions to HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support initiatives.

BACKGROUND

Definition: Local government is a sphere of government in its own right, with a number of absolute powers and others, which are concurrent competencies with other spheres of government. This Brief focuses on elected officials, usually called Councillors, and appointed officials, working in local government departments and structures.



Local government is the level of government that is closest to the people. The area of jurisdiction of local government is called a municipality, metro, district council or local authority. The residents or citizens of a municipality elect a Council to represent their interests in a democratic and accountable manner and to deliver affordable basic services.

Particularly in developing countries, local government is responsible for promoting sustainable social and economic development. How this is to be done is generally prescribed in terms of:

- Leadership that works hand-in-hand with communities

- Community participation in decision-making
- Open channels of communication
- Integrated planning and policy-making
- Partnerships with public, private and civic organisations
- Job creation
- Wise use of local resources and
- Taking community safety and health into account

Local government is a major employer, except perhaps in situations where services are provided via contracts with private companies. A local government response to HIV/AIDS therefore needs to have two main arms; an *internal* arm

targeting employees and an *external* arm targeting citizens. The main focus of this AIDS Brief is on the *external* response.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic will impact on local government in numerous ways. It will:

- Reduce the projected number of people
- Reduce life expectancy
- Increase infant mortality
- Greatly increase the need for health care
- Greatly increase the need for poverty assistance
- Exacerbate inequalities
- Result in large numbers of orphans
- Change the demographic structure of the population

- Increase the number of aged who need care (who have lost adult children)
- Affect income and expenditure patterns
- Reduce growth
- Reduce the ability of households to pay for services, rents and rates
- Threaten productivity due to increased absenteeism, higher recruitment and training costs, employment benefits and loss of skills
- Reverse years of investment in training and education

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS

Effectively meeting the challenges and fulfilling the functions of local government will, in large measure, address the multi-faceted societal and economic roots of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Local government has, however, generally been slow to develop responses to the epidemic, unclear of what its role should be and concerned with responsibilities for which it does not have the skills, capacity or resources. Yet, even where the reality within which local government operates is a multiplicity of demands, many requiring urgent action, and capacity and resource constraints which may affect delivery, there are many functions which can be assumed which will contribute significantly to addressing the epidemic.

These functions are:

Leadership

- visible and vocal political and public leadership by Councillors
- leadership by example in the workplace (workplace policies and programmes)

Co-ordination of a local AIDS response

- co-ordination within a multi-sectoral network called into being by local government
- co-ordination with other municipalities, other sectors and other levels of government

Planning in consultation

- a local AIDS plan developed with community and sectoral representatives
- AIDS issues and impact incorporated into other development planning

Facilitation

- identifying and removing barriers to action
- creating an environment which fosters involvement, participation and partnerships

Integration

- integrating HIV/AIDS prevention and/or care activities into all local government services

- encouraging partners from other sectors to do the same

Advocacy and mobilisation

- keeping HIV/AIDS in the public eye and in the public debate
- conducting local versions of national campaigns

Strengthen community responses

- providing technical assistance
- providing resources/materials and seed funding such as grants-in-aid

Promote social and economic development

- making AIDS a core issue in all development decision-making
- introducing innovative incentives to act on AIDS issues

Monitor

- including AIDS programme targets in all monitoring processes
- including reports on AIDS responses in appropriate fora

CHECKLIST

The following two checklists identify (i) *generic* local government functions (ii) *AIDS-specific functions*, which have the potential to contribute to limiting new HIV infections and mitigating the impact of the epidemic at the individual, family, community and workplace level.

Table One: Generic local government functions

KEY ROLES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Provide community leadership	Work with all sections of the community to build a shared vision and set goals
Promote social and economic well-being to address the roots of the epidemic	Ensure that all plans, policies, programmes and actions lead to economic and social development and a better quality of life for all
Promote local economic development	Enhance employment and investment
Mobilise and support community responses	Involve local citizens and groups in decisions and processes which affect them, particularly marginalised groups
Co-ordinate and integrate all efforts	Keep open channels of communication with other spheres of government and build partnerships with civic, private and public organisations
Promote and build local democracy and create liveable, integrated cities, towns and rural areas	Structure the environment to facilitate the participation of disadvantaged groups in the social and economic life of the city
Provide household infrastructure and services	Prioritise the delivery of at least a basic level of services to those who currently have little or no access to services

Table Two: AIDS-specific functions

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL*
✓ Establish an HIV/AIDS working group	✓ Identify networks and processes to prioritise HIV/AIDS as an on-going issue
✓ Develop and adopt a workplace policy on HIV/AIDS, STDs and TB	✓ Demonstrate leadership commitment on AIDS
✓ Conduct a needs assessment and an impact assessment	✓ Mobilise community leaders and the private sector to participate in a <i>Partnership Against AIDS</i>
✓ Implement an awareness and prevention programme	✓ Increase awareness, support debate and encourage action in prevention, care and support
✓ Improve access to voluntary counselling and testing and to the treatment of STDs	✓ Promote and improve access to services such as STD treatment and voluntary counselling and testing
✓ Implement a programme for the management of infected employees	✓ Establish risk reduction programmes for groups at high risk
✓ Protect the rights of employees with HIV/AIDS	✓ Provide care and support services within an enabling, non-discriminatory environment
✓ Monitor the policy and programmes regularly	✓ Monitor the local government's response regularly

* Adapted from *Guidelines for Developing a Workplace Policy and Programme on HIV/AIDS and STDs*, South African Department of Health (1997)



INTERNATIONAL NORMS

In December 1997, the Mayors and Municipal Leaders of 15 cities in Africa met in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on the occasion of the Xth International Conference on STD/AIDS in Africa, and adopted the following affirmation, called the **"ABIDJAN DECLARATION"**:

- Aware that precarious economic conditions in our cities intensify the impact of HIV/AIDS on vulnerable communities, in particular women and youth, and jeopardise our long-term local development plans;
- Recognising that our cities are increasingly becoming centres of demographic growth in our countries and that, given the powers invested in

them, our municipalities have an important role to play in responding to the many challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic;

- We hereby commit ourselves to search for solutions relevant to local needs and realities, in accordance with the goals and principles of the United Nations and our own laws and regulations, in order to respond more effectively to HIV/AIDS in our communities.

To this end we have agreed to:

- Aim to reduce the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS in our communities by implementing effective measures to reduce HIV

transmission.

- Promote and co-ordinate local multi-sectoral approaches for HIV prevention and the care of infected and affected people.
- Participate in efforts to mobilise the human and financial resources necessary to implement local strategies.
- Ensure the active involvement of people infected and affected by the HIV epidemic in designing and implementing local strategies.
- Strengthen solidarity amongst our cities and develop an effective partnership with national and international, public and private stakeholders.

We therefore commit ourselves to:

- Ensure that the search for effective solutions to HIV/AIDS is a public policy priority.
- Effectively involve our citizens in designing action plans, defining local strategies, and implementing activities.
- Provide the necessary institutional support to our cities and communities and strengthen their capacity to intervene.
- Guarantee transparency and accountability in programme management.
- Create an ALLIANCE OF MAYORS AND MUNICIPAL LEADERS to maximise commitment, participation, leadership, capacity and experience at community level in response to the challenge of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa.

The principles contained in the Dakar Declaration of 1 July 1994 serve as useful norms to guide local governments in the development of their HIV/AIDS responses.

The Principle of Responsibility

Every person, government, community, institution, private enterprise and medium must be aware of his or her responsibility and must exercise it in an active and sustainable manner.

The Principle of Engagement

Every person is affected, directly or indirectly, and therefore should respond with commitment, concern, courage and hope for the future.

The Principle of Partnership and Consensus-Building

All persons, couples, families, communities and nations must work together with compassion to build and share a common vision. These partnerships must reflect and actively promote solidarity, inclusion, integration, dialogue, participation and harmony.

The Principle of Empowerment

The empowerment of every person, but particularly the poor, the uneducated and children, is essential and must guide all action. Empowerment requires recognition of the right to knowledge, information and technology, freedom of choice and economic opportunity.

The Principle of Non-discrimination

Every person directly affected by the epidemic should remain an integral part of his or her community, with the right of equal access to work, housing, education and social services, with the right to marry, with freedom of movement, belief and association, with the right to counselling, care and treatment, justice and equity.

The Principle of Confidentiality and Privacy

Every person directly affected by the epidemic has the right to confidentiality and privacy. It can only be breached in exceptional circumstances.

The Principle of Adaptation

Every person and community should change and adapt social and cultural conditions to the new challenges of the epidemic in order to respond effectively.

The Principle of Sensitivity in Language

Language should uphold human dignity, reflect inclusion, be gender-sensitive, accurate and understandable.

The Principle of Ethics in Research

The interests of research subjects or communities should be paramount. Research should be based on free and informed consent, be non-obtrusive and non-coercive, and the results should be made available to the community for timely and appropriate action.

The Principle of Prohibition of Mandatory HIV Testing

HIV testing without informed consent should be prohibited. HIV testing should also not be a pre-requisite for access to work, travel or other services.

SUMMARY

Local government is not only optimally placed to respond to HIV/AIDS, but many of its functions have the potential to address the socio-

economic roots of the epidemic. The challenge to local government Councillors and officials is to respond in terms of people-centred and gender-

sensitive development within the bounds of ethical, legal and human rights frameworks and with full community participation.

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Useful contacts

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